

# The Oklahoma Swing Syndicate (TOSS)

## Code of Conduct

As we aim to provide a family environment, TOSS is dedicated to providing a harassment-free and safe social dance experience for everyone regardless of dance ability, dance background, gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, body size, race, age, religion or any other characteristic or trait. We do not tolerate harassment in any form. Individuals violating these rules may be sanctioned or expelled from the venue at the discretion of the TOSS board member on duty.

Harassment includes verbal comments that reinforce social structures of domination related to any of the above listed characteristics or traits, sexual images in public spaces, deliberate intimidation, stalking, following, harassing photography or recording, inappropriate physical contact, and unwelcome attention. When asked to stop any harassing behaviour participants are expected to comply immediately or will be asked to leave the premise.

No alcohol, firearms, profanity, drugs, or otherwise inappropriate behaviour will be tolerated. Failure to comply will immediately be asked to leave the premise.

TOSS supports the idea that dance roles (lead and follow) are not tied to gender. This concept has foundation in our dance history during the World War II years. We encourage all dancers to dance their preferred role, focused on having fun. We encourage all dancers to avoid assumptions regarding dance roles and to check in with their partners about their preferred role.

While there is always some risk associated with any level of physical activity, TOSS is committed to preventing injuries before they happen. Unsafe dancing is defined as any movement that puts anyone at an increased risk of physical injury of the participants or others around them. This includes, but is not limited to, yanking or jerking your partner around or unnecessarily forceful movement when leading or following (risk of shoulder, arm, and upper-back injuries), bending over your partner during a dip when leading (risk of lower back injuries), sudden unexpected shift of weight when following (don't dip yourself), or any lift where both of your partner's feet go above your knees. If you are unsure what constitutes unsafe dancing, please ask any instructor or TOSS board member.

Aerials should be limited to performances and are not appropriate on the social dance floor. Some low dips are also discouraged due the risk of injury to the participant and others in the area. For insurance reasons, instruction and practice of aerials should be limited to workshops with TOSS approved instructors and properly trained spotters.

If a participant engages in harassing or unsafe dancing behaviour, TOSS may take any action they deem appropriate, including warning the offender, or expulsion from the event with no refund. If you are being harassed, notice that someone else is being harassed, or have any other concerns, please contact any TOSS board member immediately. Contact the front desk volunteer or any of the instructors or DJs if you need assistance locating the TOSS board member on duty.

The TOSS board member on duty will be happy to help participants resolve the situation, provide escorts, contact local law enforcement if necessary, or otherwise assist those experiencing harassment in order to promote a safe environment over the duration of the event or activity.

We appreciate your assistance in keeping our events and venues safe and family friendly for everyone.

**--- Any violations of this Code of Conduct can be reported in person to a TOSS board member, or via our Contact page. Anonymous reports will be accepted. ---**

# Dance Etiquette

Try to follow the Golden Rule: treat others as you wish to be treated.

Smiles and positive attitudes are encouraged.

Avoid "offering" unsolicited dancing advice on the dance floor. If the person is engaging in a practice that is potentially injurious or otherwise inappropriate, discretely mention it to the TOSS board member or the event's instructor.

Teaching on the social dance floor is usually not appropriate. Exceptions are limited to instructors and/or teaching assistants, in designated areas off the main dance floor after the class.

Thank your partner after each dance.

Swing Dance is a partner dance, but close dancing (AKA, Blues Style Dancing), is not encouraged if the music does not call for it. Be considerate of your partner and give him or her appropriate space.

It is not necessary to apologize to your partner if a particular move is not executed perfectly. The point is not to have a perfect dance, but to have fun. However, if your mistake may have physically hurt your partner, please apologize and make sure they are okay.

Swing dancing is a social dance, therefore talking while dancing is okay and not considered bad etiquette. Moreover, not talking while dancing is not considered bad etiquette either. Do what makes you feel comfortable.

Smell Fresh! You will be dancing in close quarters with a lot of new people. You may want to bring gum or breathe mints. You may also wish to wear deodorant or cologne. Dancing is good exercise so be prepared to sweat! Many people bring extra shirts to change from sweaty clothing over the course of an evening.

Notice what the person is doing before you ask them to dance. Be wary of interrupting conversations.

Ask politely, "*Would you like to dance?*" Avoid grabbing a partner and pulling them onto the dance floor.

It is acceptable for ladies to ask gentlemen to dance. Most gentlemen are flattered by the offer.

Sometimes the perception exists that good dancers only hang out with other good dancers. This is a by-product of the fact that many dancers have been dancing together for a long time and know each other better. Remember even good dancers can be very shy people. TOSS encourages seasoned dancers to dance with new dancers to help develop the dance scene. New dancers should feel free to ask seasoned dancers to dance as well. All ages are encouraged to mix and dance together as appropriate to promote an all-inclusive enjoyable event

Here at TOSS we like to instill the idea of BAH, Basic and Happy. We aim to provide an environment that encourages everyone to dance no matter experience, age or background.

If you bump another couple, try to immediately look back and apologize. If another couple bumps you, apologize even if it is their fault. A word of apology can prevent hurt feelings that can linger long after the pain is forgotten.

## Encouraging Words for Beginners

Because there is a wide range of people in the swing scene, skills and experience levels vary greatly. However, everybody starts out as a beginner. If you are a new to dancing, notice that most of the better dancers have been working at it for quite some time. Try not to get discouraged. It may take a few months for you to feel completely comfortable swing dancing. Even then, nobody ever learns everything. In fact, the teachers spend as much time as anybody improving their dancing. Avoid dwelling on what you know or don't know. More importantly, please remember that lacking prior experience does not preclude anybody from enjoying the dance. This is supposed to fun, above all else.

## How to Say "No"

In cases where you wish to decline a dance, be polite, smile and say "No, thank you." If there is a reason why you can't dance at that time or to that song, please give them a reason. Try to deal with people honestly and directly. If you would like to dance with the person some other time, offer to dance with them later and make a point to follow up. If you have no desire to dance with this person, simply say "No thank you," with a pleasant, sincere smile. Also, please keep in mind that it is considered rude to refuse to dance with one person and then dance with another person during the same song.

## What to Do If They Say "No"

You can always ask again, but give him or her time and space before doing so. If you are turned down, do not lose heart. All dancers get turned down on occasion but there are plenty of other people that would like to dance with you. Go out and find them.....keep asking.

## Dealing with Difficult People

If somebody at a TOSS event makes you feel uncomfortable, please speak with a Board member. If you don't know a Board member, tell the DJ or instructor and he or she will get you in touch with a Board member. We will be glad to deal with them in a respectful, non-confrontational manner.

## Closing Thought

It is wise to be light-hearted enough to just enjoy the dance regardless of whether or not everyone is at their best etiquette. Enjoy, have fun. Enjoy the music, the company and exercise. Fun is the most important thing to remember.